

MEETING SUMMARY

Whitewater Effigy Mound Preserve

Stakeholder and Public Meeting

December 8, 2010

The initial public and stakeholder meeting for the Whitewater Effigy Mound Preserve was held at 7:00 PM in the Whitewater City Hall on December 8 2010. About 20 citizens attended the meeting, including; neighbors, members of the public, Effigy Mounds Friends, and Effigy Mounds Task Force members. The names of the participants are included at the end of this summary. Also in attendance were, Whitewater Parks and Recreation Director Matt Amundson, Tom Jennings, lead consultant and landscape architect; Heather Patti, a restoration ecologist; and Bob Birmingham, a former state archeologist with the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Please note that some of the input below is borrowed from a recent newspaper article about the meeting.

Matt Amundson began the meeting by introducing the consultants and giving some background about the project:

"A formal plan is being prepared for the restoration and preservation of this unique archeologically significant site on Whitewater's west side. The City has contracted with Jennings and Associates, a planning firm that has significant background in land restoration and planning, as well as archeological preservation."

"This has been a site with a lot of public interest and a lot of concern over how the site is currently being maintained," Amundson said at the start of the meeting. "This is an opportunity to restore and preserve the site for what can be an educational site."

He noted that interested citizens have been serving on an ad hoc committee of the Park and Recreation Board.

"They have brought us to the point to where the city has hired Jennings and Associates," Amundson continued. "They have been on site, toured other sites and have completed other restoration sites. They will be discussing what our options and opportunities are. But the purpose of this meeting is to know what our residents want at the site."

Then Bob Birmingham, our archeologist, described the archeological importance of the site and its characteristics:

"The effigy mounds are a world wonder, these exist nowhere else in the world; they're like Stonehenge, and they have not escaped foreign interests. But we often take them for

granted. There is an old axiom that says if it is nearby, it can't be that interesting," Birmingham jested. "Otherwise, it would not be nearby – you would have to spend \$5,000 and go to Egypt to see something interesting. But we have these unique sites right here."

Birmingham explained that in his research, he has discovered that the mounds are related to the cultural and belief systems of the native peoples who built them.

"Over hundreds of years, native people sculpted the landscape in many areas as a three-dimensional representation of their religion," he said. "Sometimes these were a vast area; a vast environment has certain powers, and they're sculptures would bring out the spirits of that power. They constantly recreated the world, and ties the world to their ancestors in the form spirit beings."

He added that the mounds -often in the shapes of animals - represented the "clan animals" as well, as certain clans had more power than other clans and thus were represented by different animals.

The effigies in the Whitewater area include birds (called "thunderbirds") long-tailed panther-like water spirits and likely snakes. There also are round and conical mounds that Birmingham said possibly might be related to celestial bodies such as the sun and moon; also, conical mounds might also be burial locations.

Most of the mounds in Wisconsin were built between 700 and 1,100 A.D., Birmingham explained, noting that mounds always were close to lakes or rivers because water represented life. But some, like the one in Whitewater, was built as a "remote" ceremonial site.

"All remote sites have one thing in common, and that is they are close to springs," he said. "Springs were considered entrances into the spiritual world. It is life itself coming up. About 1,000 years ago, this was considered to be a very special spot, even before the mounds were built, because of the springs to the north of the site."

He added that no formal archeological excavation of the area has taken place.

Heather Patti of RA Smith then spoke about the native vegetation and invasive species in the preserve. She said the area is an Oak Savannah or an "Oak Opening."

"Oak Savannah's are very rare," she said. "They are restricted to just Wisconsin and Minnesota. This area is a mature, intact Oak Savannah. The hair on my neck stood up when I saw it. We have a real treasure here, and the presence of the mounds make it even more special."

Patti said there are several invasive species in the preserve, such as Garlic Mustard, Thistle and Reed Canary Grass. She added that these "could be worked on over time" to restore the area to a more native ecology. Heather also recommended creation of a controlled burn schedule.

Tom Jennings then led the public input part of the discussion, which comprised the majority of the meeting.

We have accumulated meeting notes from three sources: the flip chart that was written up as people spoke; Tom's notes he took during the meeting; and a description of the meeting that was in the Daily Union.

FLIP CHART NOTES

- Look into water source east of Mounds parkway.
- Plant several different tree species. There was a concern if we only manage toward the Bur Oaks, the site could be decimated if a disease struck. Encourage more tree diversity.
- Weed problems/appearance are an issue. Drop-off in attendance as a result.
- Mound restoration, to enhance education.
- The site has a spiritual energy impact on visitors. Many visitors feel the energy of the place and in the mounds themselves.
- It is a natural place to teach and meet the needs of visitors with different goal sets and diverse groups. It is attractive to many age groups. It has spiritual, cultural, historical and nature based importance.
- Visitor Rob Nurie, a landscape historian noted the following: The place has natural and cultural importance. In the past it reflected the culture of the people who lived here. What experience do you, the community, want it to have? What do you want to save for future generations? What is important to you, the community?
- Plant local genotypes.
- Trails and orientation needs clarification they are currently confusing.
- Put more information on signs.
- Parking; add a pullover?
- Do an Archeological study.
- This is a unique site. We need to communicate with Wisconsin Historical Society and look into regulations.
- Better delineate mounds.
- Promote the preserve with seasonal activities and highlights, such as seasonal hikes, etc.
- Encourage and promote the Friends Group and volunteer activities.
- Continue to maintain prairie understory.
- Involve UW-Whitewater archeologist, or biology departments, Native American group?
- This is a Ho Chunk ceded area. Bob Birmingham explained that 'ceded area' means that the Ho Chunk were the tribe that ceded this land to European settlers.
- Incorporate landscape as a whole ; regard nearby residences.
- Kori Oberle, Director of the Hoard Museum said that the City of Whitewater or the Friends Group could post information about the Effigy Mounds Preserve at Hoard Museum. She noted that the Hoard Museum has a significant display and section devoted to effigy mounds in this area of Wisconsin. She also suggested greater connection and linkages between the Hoard museum and the Preserve. It could be a mutually beneficial relationship that promotes tourism and events at both places.
- Look at the Jefferson County Parks Ho-Chunk site as an example and look at their parking and trail maintenance.
- Needs to fit in within its context and have better educational value, for example, for school groups.
- Potential for parking and access to the West, could potentially tie in with future development.

- Keep future generations and long term in mind.
- Insure continuity, no stops and starts. Make plans that are the “right size” and sustainable.
- Make investments into the preserve.
- Come to budget hearings and support improvements.
- Look into funding opportunities, federal?
- City’s park budget is issue.
- Apply for grants, be aware of National Historic Places Fund status.
- Trails not clearly defined.
- Would like a kiosk at the entrance idea to introduce site then minimal signage along trails.
- Integrate open area better into rest of the site.
- Think about fences; a gradual draw or pull into the site.
- Use native plantings.
- Consider making the preserve more accessible for the disabled.
- Go to dailyunion.com for an article on tonight’s meeting.
- Mound maintenance ideas;
 - No mow mix or short prairie grasses
 - Keeping it turf, visibility
 - Mow around base and have short grasses on top
 - Walking on or biking over mounds an issue
 - Not use large city mowers

NOTES FROM TOM JENNINGS

- The site is has a number of positive aspects and we should have a number of goals aimed at improving it.
- Preserve is sacred.
- Inter-generational and teaching opportunities.
- Cultural artifacts.
- Educational opportunities.
- Trails and maintenance.
- Native people and current visitors attracted to the site because of the natural aspects and specialness of the place.
- Use plants that are native to this specific part of the State.
- Tie into bike path and hiking trails.
- Very important unique cultural site in a special environment.
- Want archeological study.
- Communicate with Landmarks Commission and National Historic Groups. Create volunteer position that acts as liaison to other State and National Groups.
- Use native grasses and plants.
- Prairie and savannah are sustainable.
- Delineate mounds.
- Keep people off mounds.
- Have seasonal approach to scheduling activities and seasons.
- Sacred place.
- Need to be good neighbor.
- Native American Association
- Trail not clearly delineated.
- This is a sacred space.
- Attempt to create a similar more authentic experience.

- Preserve views of neighboring country side.
- Have small visitor center for site that also has links to Hoard Museum.
- Introduce the mystery of these mounds and an overview of history and culture.
- Make the site more attractive to school groups. Or reach out to school groups.
- Make improvements small scale.
- We have a responsibility to the past.
- Encourage interest and participation in the site for future generations.
- Natural gardens at entry from the east.
- Protect views from the site.
- Would Ho-Chunk want to manage this place?

Some of the prevalent themes heard during the meeting: spiritual, good neighbor, more archeology, naturally connected, educational, sustainable, special/unique, stewardship, advocacy, connections.

NEWSPAPER

In summary, other concerns voiced by the audience included:

- Maintaining a proper appearance for both the mounds and surrounding area.
- Keeping surrounding housing projects to a minimum to preserve the "natural view" that the native people had when the mounds were first built.
- Possibly rebuilding parts of mounds that have been damaged.
- Maintaining tree diversification to make sure that single species of trees are not devastated by diseases.
- Integrating paths and bike paths.
- Fix the signs that are out there now to create an easier way to navigate the preserve.
- Adding more informational signs or, possibly, building an interpretive kiosk with more detailed information before walking through the area.
- Possibly extending the existing street to allow for more parking, or possibly adding another entrance to the area from the west side.
- Holding seasonal hikes. For instance, the mounds are best seen in the spring and autumn.
- Possibly increase the tourism aspects of the preserve.
- Preserving the "sacred geometry" and "positive spiritual energy" of the area.

There appeared to be wide agreement among attendees that the preserve should have a major education factor, including historical, cultural, geographical and environmental aspects.

Mat Amundson noted that the next step in the process would be a Draft Program or outline of what should be included in the final plan. We would also present a preliminary conceptual plan.

Sign-up Sheet Info.

Name	Address	Phone
Dan Sable	131 N. Fremont Street	262-473-6219
Andrew Crone	1590 Wildwood Road	262-458-2006
Carol Christ	445 W. Center	262-745-9676
Roberta Taylor	1226 W Florence # 24	262-473-3622
Rod Berg	1716 Turtle Mound Lane	262-473-2681
Sue Scherer	1672 Mound View Place	262-473-6797
Jon Kachel	1690 Mound View Place	262-473-4141
Mariann Scott	421 E Cravath Street	262-473-4219
Linda Loomer	726 E Cravath	262-473-2330
Richard Helmick	227 W Boone Court	262-473-7884
Rod Nurre	N1624 County Road N Columbus WI	920-623-2479
Kari Oberle	Hoard Museum Fort Atkinson WI	920-563-7769
Thomas Kutz	Fort Atkinson	920-728-2063
Ron Ebel	N3485 Bente Road Jefferson WI	262-593-8784
Tom Harmon	N3305 County Road F Helenville WI	262-593-8436
Denay Trykowski	248 Woodland Drive Whitewater WI 53190	262-473-2300